

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 13646 151344Z

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 13646

CALCUTTA 2287 FOLLOWS. SENT TO NEW DELHI FOR ACTION ON 15SEP 76.
BEING RPTD FOR YOU INFO.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 2287

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CGEN, SCUL, PORS, IN, US
SUBJ: ALLEGED HARASSMENT OF USC MEMBERS OF ISKCON

REF: CALCUTTA 2213, CALCUTTA 2219, CALCUTTA 2253;
NEW DELHI 13242

1. CONOFF CALLED ON GOWB HOME SECRETARY BISWAROOP MUKHOPADYAY
ON SEPTEMBER 13 TO DISCUSS ALLEGATIONS RAISED BY USC MEMBERS
OF ISKCON REGARDING HARASSMENT.

2. CONOFF NOTED THAT AT LEAST TEN USC MEMBERS OF ISKCON HAD
BEEN ASKED TO LEAVE INDIA, EIGHT WHO HELD TOURIST VISAS AND
TWO WHO HELD ENTRY VISAS. HOME SECRETARY SAID THAT HE HAD NO
INFORMATION THAT ANYONE WHO HELD A VALID VISA WAS BEING ASKED
TO LEAVE INDIA BEFORE THE EXPIRATION OF THE TIME PERMITTED
TO STAY IN INDIA; THOSE TWO WHO WERE ON ENTRY VISAS, HE
ASSURED CONOFF, WOULD HAVE THEIR FILES CHECKED AND HE WOULD
SEE WHY THEY WERE BEING ASKED TO QUIT INDIA. HE PROMISED AN
ANSWER AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 13646 151344Z

3. IN RESPONSE TO CONOFF'S QUERY HE STATED THAT HE WAS UNAWARE

OF ANY CHANGE IN IMMIGRATION POLICY WHICH REFLECTED ADVERSELY ON USC MEMBERS OF ISKCON OR FOR THAT MATTER ON ANY FOREIGNER RESIDING IN WEST BENGAL. HE WENT ON THAT ISKCON MEMBERS WERE KNOWN AS CONTINUAL "OVERSTAYERS."

4. CONOFF EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER RECENT ARTICLES IN NEWS-PAPERS WHICH STATE THAT THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN ISKCON AND "FOREIGN POWERS." CONOFF NOTED THAT THESE ARTICLES COULD INCITE UNTHINKING INDIVIDUALS TO VIOLENT ACTIONS AGAINST USC ISKCON MEMBERS. HOME SECRETARY WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE ARTICLES WERE UNFORTUNATE STATED THAT HE HAD HEARD OF NOTHING WHICH WOULD INDICATE THAT ANY MEMBER OF ISKCON WAS IN DANGER; CONOFF REITERATED CONCERN OVER POTENTIAL EFFECT OF SUCH ARTICLES.

5. CONOFF ADDED THAT HE WANTED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT WHILE THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO RPT NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THE US GOVERNMENT AND ISKCON, WE ARE OBLIGED TO INTERCEDE ON BEHALF OF ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS REGARDLESS OF RELIGION WHEN THEY ARE HAVING DIFFICULTIES WITH THE AUTHORITIES. IN THIS CONNECTION CONOFF STATED THAT WE ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS THAT MEMBERS OF THE CID ARE INQUIRING ABOUT A CONNECTION BETWEEN ISKCON AND LIEBOWITZ AND CONOFF. CONOFF THEN POINTED OUT THAT LIEBOWITZ' VISIT TO MAYAPUR (SEE CALCUTTA 2213) WAS AT THE SUGGESTION OF THE NADIA DISTRICT MAGISTRATE. VISITS BY AMCIT ISKCON PERSONNEL TO CONOFF WERE STRICTLY FOR CONSULAR SERVICES. HOME SECRETARY SAID THAT ANY INVESTIGATION WHICH WAS BEING CONDUCTED INTO ISKCON AFFAIRS WOULD NATURALLY INVOLVE INVESTIGATIONS WITH WHOM THOSE UNDER INVESTIGATION VISITED, BUT ADDED THAT GOWB WAS NOT RPT NOT INVESTIGATING ISKCON; WHEN PRESSED ON THIS HE SAID THAT THERE WERE A VARIETY OF INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WHO DID NOT REPORT TO HIS OFFICE.

6. WHILE CONVERSATION WAS SOMEWHAT FORMAL IT ENDED PLEASANTLY WITH HOME SECRETARY ADVISING CONOFF THAT HE WOULD MAKE INQUIRIES REGARDING THOSE USC CITIZENS WHO WERE ON ENTRY VISAS AND ACKNOWLEDGING VALIDITY OF OUR CONCERN REGARDING THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF US CITIZENS.
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PAGE 03 NEW DE 13646 151344Z

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